



**Quarterly Report**  
**NEPAL: CIVIC AND VOTER EDUCATION**  
**USAID Cooperative Agreement No. 367-G-00-00097-00**  
**January 1 to March 31, 2001**

## **I. SUMMARY**

Although many Nepalis had high expectations that democracy would bring prosperity and development to their country, some have come to realize that without an active and informed citizenry, democracy will be unresponsive to citizens' needs. The lack of confidence Nepalis feel about their political process is due, in part, to the majority's unfamiliarity with and lack of participation in their democratic institutions. Since 1994, NDI has been partaking in a broader national effort to increase Nepalis contribution to their governing bodies. In July 2000 with funding from USAID, NDI began civic and voter education programs in Nepal. These programs intend to inform Nepalis about how their government and electoral system work as well as encourage them to get involved in their political process.

During this quarter, the Institute conducted a variety of civic education related activities, including: 1) building the capacity of a local civics group; 2) meeting with an Advisory Board of organizations and individuals working to improve civic education in Nepal; 3) drafting civic education materials; 4) conducting a benchmark survey; and 5) coordinating among donors, government agencies and local NGOs addressing civic education related activities.

Also during this quarter, the Institute conducted a number of voter education related activities, including: 1) meeting with the Coordination Committee of organizations working to increase the level of voter education programming; 2) writing and producing radio shows; 3) producing and distributing a resource manual and voter education booklets; 4) introducing election officials to the training sessions for officials and the forum materials that will be used in election-related trainings; and 5) holding district level voter education forums.

## **II. BACKGROUND**

### ***A. Civic Education***

Nepalis receive little, if any, civics training in school. As a result, the adult population in Nepal often lacks the necessary foundation for becoming active and informed citizens in their democracy. To address this gap in the education system, key leaders in Nepal's education community have been working to introduce civics training in school curricula. Resulting from this initiative, many schools around the country now offer an elective civic education course.

Unfortunately, many schools are lacking the materials for the course and the teaching staff to properly convey the civics materials to students.

In response to and in cooperation with the Ministry of Education, the Higher Secondary Education Board, the Nepali Foundation for Advanced Studies (NEFAS), academics and local and political leaders, NDI is producing and distributing civic education materials that will be used for the *Contemporary Society* course as well as by political and civic leaders throughout the country. The Institute is also preparing to conduct interactive workshops to inform civic and political leaders and teaching professionals about the contents of the materials as well as how to effectively use these materials to relay civic messages to others.

The re-working of this text has altered the timeline for executing the civic education-training program. NDI now expects the materials to be completed by the end of April 2001. The training of trainers program will be held in May 2001 and the other workshops will continue to take place through July 2001.

## ***B. Voter Education***

Although materials about Nepal's election laws and polling practices have already been produced and distributed throughout Nepal, they are targeted for highly educated citizens. Because approximately 70% of Nepalis are illiterate, many of the materials cannot be easily communicated to an adequate number of voters. As a result, the majority of citizens know very little about how the electoral process works or what role citizens can play in ensuring credible and fair elections. Furthermore, many of the local civic and political leaders are unaware of their responsibilities during the polling process. These circumstances have led to violations of the Election Code of Conduct, which is intended to prevent voter intimidation, vote buying, illicit fundraising and spending, and electioneering at the polling stations.

Within this context, NDI, in close consultation with the Election Commission, is conducting a nation-wide voter education program intended to increase citizens' awareness and participation in the electoral process. The Institute's activities will target the general public, with specific outreach to women, individuals from the lower castes, as well as district leaders involved in elections. Through material production and distribution, discussion forums and radio programs, NDI will relay messages about voters' rights and responsibilities, election officials' duties, voter registration, the Election Code of Conduct and the procedures for reporting election-related violations. The program will also include messages about the benefits of participation in the democratic process.

### **III. PROGRAM ACTIVITIES**

#### **A. Civic Education**

##### *Building the Capacity of a Local Civics Group*

In addition to work outlined in the program proposal, NDI has been working with the Society for the Promotion of Civic Education (SPCE), a local NGO, to build its capacity to carry on civic programming in Nepal when NDI's activities are complete. In an effort to transfer skills to the SPCE, the Institute has involved the SPCE in many aspects of its programming including designing and implementing the benchmark survey and drafting the civics education materials. NDI has also assisted the SPCE in fundraising.

The president of the SPCE, Dr. Trailokya Nath Upreti, is the former Nepali Ambassador to France. Other high level members include the chair of Tribhuvan University's education department, principals and respected academics. The organization's mission is to promote knowledge, skills and attitudes among Nepali youth conducive to effective participation in civic life.

##### *Meeting with Advisory Board*

NDI has been holding regular meetings with the Advisory Board, consisting of influential Nepalis in the education community, in order to seek their input on the program design and implementation. Recently, the Advisory Board reviewed the program and material production timeline, the draft civic education materials, NDI's work with the SPCE as well as the design and implementation of the upcoming interactive workshops.

##### *Drafting Civic Education Materials*

Although NDI has worked in cooperation with Friedrich Ebert Stiftung FES and NEFAS to draft civic education materials for the *Contemporary Society* course, the Institute has played the primary role in editing the materials. The first draft is complete and NDI has incorporated comments from at least 10 Nepali and foreign professionals in the education community, including adding pictures and completing the initial formatting of the documents. In the upcoming weeks, the Institute will send the materials for review to other professionals in the civics and education community and prepare the materials for final printing. When the materials are perfected, NDI will translate them into Nepali utilizing these materials during the interactive workshops for civic and political leaders and teaching professionals. In addition to disbursing materials during the workshops, NDI will disseminate the materials strategically throughout the districts.

##### *Conducting a Benchmark Survey*

In recent weeks, NDI, in collaboration with a representative from the SPCE conducted a benchmark survey to gain additional insight into the knowledge level of future workshop participants. The survey inquired into participants' understanding of civic education, their professional experience, usual techniques of relaying educational information to others and their

interest in learning more about civics. NDI Program Officer Dipendra Tamang tested the survey in Kathmandu, Lalitpur and Bhaktapur districts. After making minor edits, he and an SPCE representative spent five days in Pokhara and surrounding areas interviewing potential program participants. NDI is now compiling the findings of the survey and preparing a report.

#### *Coordinating Donors, Government Agencies and Local NGOs*

On January 18, NDI organized the second Civic Education Coordination meeting at the American Center. The meeting brought together various INGOs, government agencies and local NGOs working in the field of civics and education. The main agenda of the meeting was to share information about ongoing programs and to develop a more comprehensive strategy for introducing civic education into schools and communities throughout Nepal.

All participating members agreed to formally name the working group the *Civic Education Initiative in Nepal*. The members also decided to create an e-mail list serve that can assist in communication efforts between members, to develop resource library of civic education materials that all groups can access and a group web site. The web site will serve as a place to house the resource library and to find out what organizations are working in the field of civics, their contact information and a calendar of upcoming events. NDI has already begun designing and implementing these systems.

Participants decided that *Civic Education Initiative* participants would meet every three months. NDI is working with the SPCE to prepare it for continuing the coordination effort once NDI's program ends.

### **B. Voter Education Program**

#### *Meeting with the Coordinating Committee*

NDI has held several rounds of meetings with the Coordination Committee, a group formed to provide input on voter education program activities. During these meetings committee members discussed the logistical preparations and participant lists for the 15 district forums as well as the design of the materials.

#### *Writing and Producing Radio Shows*

The Institute submitted a draft of radio drama scripts to the Election Commission for review and received formal approval. NDI has completed translation of these dramas into nine local languages (in addition to Nepali) and is working with the artists and radio studio to produce the scripts. NDI plans to broadcast these dramas throughout the country. The dramas will relay messages about: 1) citizens' constitutional rights regarding elections; 2) the voter registration and identity card process; 3) voting procedures; 4) citizens' rights and responsibilities in a democratic society; and 5) the Election Code of Conduct, including protest and claims procedures.

### *Producing and Distributing a Resource Manual and Voter Education Booklet*

NDI submitted a draft resource manual and voter education booklet to the Election Commission for suggestions and feedback. The manual is also intended as an ongoing resource for district election officers, political party leaders, civil society leaders and other critical players in the election process.

NDI also submitted a draft voter education booklet to the Election Commission for formal approval. Once the Election Commission approved the booklet, NDI began printing it. The Institute is distributing these booklets primarily through district election offices but will also offer them to political and civic leaders where feasible. The voter education booklet includes easy-to-understand summaries of pertinent election laws, information about how to register and vote and the importance of elections.

### *Introducing Election Officers to the Forum Materials and Program Format*

On February 15-16, NDI held an Orientation Program in Kathmandu for district election officers to familiarize the officers with their roles as resource people in preparation for the district level forums. The main objective of the program was to train election officers on how to run the forums in their respective districts. The program was covered by national television.

### *Holding District Level Forums*

Following the initial orientation of district election officers, NDI conducted two pilot forums in Rupandehi and Lalitpur districts. The main objective of the pilot forums was to test the effectiveness of the forums' design and get feedback and suggestions on the draft booklet. All invited participants attended, including more than 50 women and men participants. In Rupandehi participants included the District Chief Judge, the Chief District Officer, the Deputy Superintendent of Police, local level civic and political leaders, the District Election Officer and staff of the district election office. More than 45 participants in Lalitpur came including the District Development Committee (DDC) Chair, the Chief District Officer, local level civic and political leaders, the District Election Officer and staff from the district election office. NDI was pleased to welcome USAID Program Officer Bishnu Adhikari to the Lalitpur forum as well.

NDI did achieve good balance from the major political parties at the forums, and this will continue to be an ongoing objective for the Institute during upcoming forums. Participants filled out pre and post forum questionnaires developed by NDI. The participant's evaluation (both written and oral) gave positive comments on virtually all aspects of the forums. They also highly praised the resource manual used during the forum. The forums were covered by national television and radio and featured in a number of local newspapers.

NDI is currently working on the logistical preparations for the upcoming 13 forums.

## **IV. RESULTS AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS**

### **A. Civic Education**

- Materials for the civic education workshops are being finalized and are close to being ready for widespread distribution.
- Using the benchmark survey, the Institute has gained helpful information that will add to the effective implementation of the interactive workshops.
- NDI's coordinating effort has permitted participating organizations to share information and discuss ways to cooperate. The Institute has designed mechanisms that will hopefully facilitate coordination between government agencies and international and local NGOs.
- The Institute is continuing to build strong relationships with local organizations and government agencies involved in civics and education.

### **B. Voter Education**

- The Election Commission is engaged in outreach work to educate Nepalis about elections.
- The 20 radio dramas have successfully been written, are being produced, and will begin broadcast beginning on May 5 and continue running on a weekly basis (20 weeks).
- The Election Commission formally approved the resource manual, the Institute has now printed 1,500 copies of the manual, which will be distributed to participants during the forums and used as a centerpiece for forum discussion, an additional 28,800 copies will be produced for distribution to the general public.
- NDI is continuing to build strong relationships with Election Commission officials. District Election Offices are being strengthened, increasing their profile in the community and building good relations with civic and political leaders.
- 30 participants attended NDI's forum for election officers including the Secretary, Joint Secretaries, Under Secretaries and Section Officers of the Central Election Commission as well as 15 District Election Officers.

## **IV. EVALUATION/CONCLUSIONS**

In keeping with the goals of the proposal, the work this quarter has addressed the following objectives:

*Objective: To promote awareness of democratic norms and human rights in Nepal.*

In Nepal, before engaging in advocacy and awareness campaigns on democracy and human rights, it has been necessary to create a user-friendly resource that outlines these democratic principles. NDI and other Nepali civil society organizations have been engaged in the creation of materials that will be used in a training of trainers program for civic educators. NDI has held coordinating meetings among the groups working on this civic education program. NDI has worked to address democratic norms and human rights in Nepal despite delays in the publication of these materials. Subsequently, NDI will be conducting these trainings during the next quarter.

*Objective: To work collaboratively with Nepali agencies to increase the population's general knowledge of the electoral system.*

This quarter, NDI worked to increase the public's knowledge of the electoral system by facilitating the development of election education activities run by the Election Commissioner. Voter education workshops are being conducted for election officers in 15 districts throughout the country. Additionally, NDI will reach a broad number of Nepalis through radio dramas on voter education that will begin in May. In order to answer the questions of election officials and voters about election law, NDI has been involved with the production of an election manual, which will be distributed to serve as a user-friendly resource guide to officials and voters. Through the production of new resource materials, educational election radio programs and trainings for election officials NDI has been using its multi-strategy approach to engage with Nepali agencies in the effort to increase the public's knowledge about the electoral system.

## **V. FUTURE ACTIVITIES**

In order to address the objectives outlined for this grant in the proposal, NDI will continue to engage in civic and voter education activities. During the next quarter, NDI will finalize the civic education materials and begin to conduct the civic education workshops for trainers. NDI will also hold the third coordinating meeting bringing organizations together to foster collaboration and community planning for civic education programs. For the voter education program, the Institute will begin the airing of the 20 new radio programs and complete 13 additional district forums.